

REMARKS

The applicants note with appreciation the acknowledgement of the claim for priority under section 119 and the notice that all of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

Claims 1 – 14 are pending, with claims 10 – 14 being withdrawn. New claims 15 – 20 were added. Claims 6 – 7 were re-written from multiple dependent form with new claims 16 – 17 corresponding thereto. The applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1 – 4 and 9 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 3,349,765, Blanford (“Blanford”). Claims 1 – 9 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Blanford. The rejections are respectfully traversed for reasons including the following, which are provided by way of example, insofar as the rejections may be applied to the amended claims.

As described in the application, one or more aspects of the invention are directed to providing “a laminate sheet which is capable of preventing the formation of defects on an adhesive sheet when the laminate sheet is wound into a roll.” (Specification page 3, lines 9 - 12.)

According to the claims, e.g., claim 1, the invention is directed to a laminate sheet windable into a roll. There are a plurality of cover sheet portions having a predetermined form, formed from an adhesive sheet laminated on a long release sheet. There is also a protective member laminated on the long release sheet. The protective member is thicker than the adhesive sheet and is provided longitudinally on the long release sheet and spaced apart from the cover sheet portions so as not to overlap the cover sheet portions when the laminate sheet is wound longitudinally into a roll. (E.g., claim 1; see also claim 3.) Thereby, “a slight gap is produced

between the surface of the cover sheet portion and the back surface of the release sheet" when wound into a roll, and "traces caused by winding pressure are reliably prevented from forming on the cover sheet portion. (Specification page 21, line 17 – page 22, line 3.)

Without conceding that Blanford discloses any feature of the present invention, Blanford is directed to a surgical drape. According to Blanford, a thin transparent plastic film 10 is covered with a protective backing 12 and marginal reinforcements 13. A small no-adhesive area 16 is provided beneath the juncture of the marginal reinforcements 13 and the protective backing 12. (Column 2, lines 59 – 72.)

The office action asserts that Blanford discloses the invention as claimed. The office action specifically asserts that Blanford teaches an adhesive sheet 10 and protective member 13 on a long release sheet 12. However, Blanford's marginal reinforcements 13 are not laminated on the protective backing 12. Rather, Blanford's marginal reinforcements 13 and protective backing 12 are disposed on the thin plastic film 10. As best understood, it appears that elements 10 and 12 are confused in the office action.

Blanford fails to teach or suggest the invention, as presently claimed, when the claims are considered as a whole. Blanford fails to teach or suggests, for example, "a plurality of cover sheet portions." (See, e.g., claims 1, 3.) To the contrary, Blanford provides a single surgical drape.

Moreover, Blanford fails to teach or suggest that the protective member be "provided longitudinally on the long release sheet." (See, e.g., claims 1, 3.) To the contrary, Blanford teaches that the protective member be provided transverse to the plastic film 10 (e.g., Fig. 3).

In addition, Blanford fails to teach or suggest that the protective member "is thicker than said adhesive sheet." (See, e.g., claims 1, 3.) To the contrary, Blanford teaches that "the

marginal edge reinforcements may be of a different material than the protective backing 12, but it is preferred that they be of the same material.” (Col. 4, lines 4 – 7.

Blanford fails to teach or suggest, for example, these elements recited in independent claims 1 and 3. It is respectfully submitted therefore that claims 1 and 3 are patentable over Blanford.

For at least these reasons, the combination of features recited in independent claims 1 and 3, when interpreted as a whole, is submitted to patentably distinguish over the prior art. In addition, Blanford clearly fails to show other claimed features as well.

With respect to the rejected dependent claims, applicant respectfully submits that these claims are allowable not only by virtue of their dependency from independent claims 1 or 3, but also because of additional features they recite in combination.

New claims 15 – 20 have been added to further define the invention, and are believed to be patentable for reasons including these set out above.

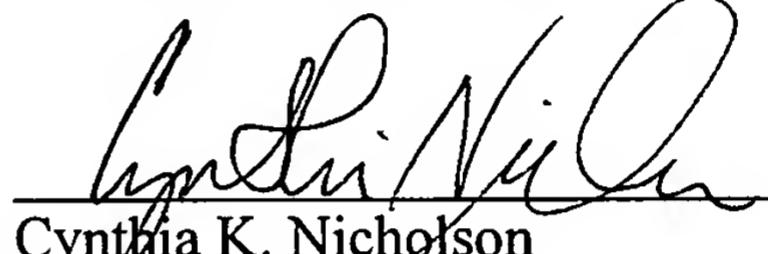
The applicants respectfully submit that, as described above, the cited prior art does not show or suggest the combination of features recited in the claims. The applicants do not concede that the cited prior art shown any of the elements recited in the claims. However, the applicants have provided specific examples of elements in the claims that are clearly not present in the cited prior art.

The applicants strongly emphasize that one reviewing the prosecution history should not interpret any of the examples the applicants have described herein in connection with distinguishing over the prior art as limiting to those specific features in isolation. Rather, for the sake of simplicity, the applicants have provided examples of why the claims described above are distinguishable over the cited prior art.

In view of the foregoing, the applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. A timely notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If questions relating to patentability remain, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

Please charge any unforeseen fees that may be due to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully submitted,



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